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ACROSS THE PLAINS
TO CALIFORNIA IN 1852

JOURNAL OF
MRS. LODISA FRIZZELL

EDITED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT
IN THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
BY VICTOR HUGO FALTSITS
KEEPER OF MANUSCRIPTS



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APRIL 1915

form p-47 (17-27-18 250)

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FROM A WATER-COLOR BY MRS. FRIZZELL, AUTHOR OF
THE ACCOMPANYING NARRATIVE

ACROSS THE PLAINS TO CALIFORNIA IN 1852

FROM THE LITTLE WABASH RIVER IN ILLINOIS TO
THE PACIFIC SPRINGS OF WYOMING

JOURNAL OF MRS. LODISA FRIZZELL

EDITED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT IN THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

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EDITOR'S NOTE

THIS simple narrative journal was written at Cañon Creek in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California, in the middle of December, 1852, by Mrs. Lodisa Frizzell, who, with her husband, Lloyd Frizzell, and their four sons, set out on April 14th, of that year, from their unnamed home, not far from Ewington, Effingham County, Illinois, on the upper reaches of the Little Wabash River, on an overland journey to California. The journal records her observations and experiences from the Little Wabash, across Illinois and Missouri, to St. Louis and St. Joseph, and over the St. Joseph and Oregon Trails to the Pacific Springs, in Fremont County, Wyoming. Here, at the continental divide and at the halfway point of her journey, the journal ends, on June 26th, or the seventy-fourth day out. It was nearly seven months later, in her snowbound quarters of the Sierra Nevadas, that she busied herself with its composition from notes she had kept by the way, enlivened by her memory.

Mrs. Frizzell's journal was secured by The New York Public Library with the manuscripts of the Ford Collection, presented by the late J. Pierpont Morgan. It has a quaint manuscript title-page, as follows: *Narrative of a Journal [sic] across the "Plains" in 1852 by Mrs. Lodisa Frizzell. Illustrated by several original drawings. And to my relatives, and friends, respectfully subscribed.* A later hand has written over the title the words, "The Overland Route to California." Among the numerous amateurish illustrations drawn by lead pencil and tinted with colors, three are reproduced here; also her three route maps. The other illustrations include the following: "The home I left behind me" (Her home in Illinois); "Crossing the Nimehaw"; "Killing a buffalo"; "Independence Rock"; "A view of Devil's Gate"; "Distant view of Courthouse & Chimney rocks"; "Chimney Rock 5 miles distant"; "Distant view of Laramie Peak"; "A view of Sweetwater mountains. 5 miles west of the Devil's Gate"; "Buffalo skeletons"; "View of the Wind range of mountains"; "View of South Pass"; "A Horned Frog."

Written on inner covers or flyleaves are several names, which may be of value for future identification. They are: John G. Harness, 1852; Nancy Varnyan; G. W. Catron; Wm. Malone; Orin Anderson and T. Alexander. Nothing has been discovered of the personal history of this Frizzell family. The patronymic, however, is found at an early period in New England.

In 1859, Lieutenant Gouverneur K. Warren, of the corps of topographical engineers, U. S. A., issued a *Memoir* and map of the exploring expeditions in the West, from 1800 to 1857, and an epitome thereof forms a part of volume 1 of Wheeler's *Report*, appendix F, of the United States Geographical Surveys west of the one hundredth meridian (Washington, 1889). Among the narratives of those who, in the main, travelled the route covered by Mrs. Frizzell, the earliest is the journal of Robert Stuart, 1812, of which The New York Public Library has a complete typewritten transcript, made from the original manuscript in 1908. This journey was begun in June, 1812, at Astoria, and ended at the Ohio. It was undertaken by representatives of the Pacific Fur Company. The next important expedition to the Rocky Mountains was made by Captain B. L. E. Bonneville, 1832-1836, of which we have the record in Washington Irving's *The Rocky Mountains*, first published in 1837, in two volumes. In 1835, Colonel, afterwards General Henry Dodge, covered a part of the way en route from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. In 1842, J. C. Frémont traversed the Plains on his first expedition, ending in the Wind River Mountains, and in 1843-1844, he went over much of the same ground. Joel Palmer's journal of his travels over the Rocky Mountains, in 1845-1846, was printed in 1852, and has been edited as a part of Thwaites's *Early Western Travels*. Among the California pioneers, who went over the route in the mad rush of 1849, was Amasa Delano, who wrote an illuminating journal, published as *Life on the Plains*, in 1854. These and many other publications have been consulted in editing the Frizzell journal.

THE JOURNAL

PREFACE

Agreeable to my promise I now set down to write the incidents of my journey to Callifornia. Having taken notes by the way, I shall be able by the assistance of my memory, to give you a full & accurate account of the "trip." It is now about the middle of December,¹ I am here in midst of the Sierra Nevada rightly named snowy mountains, the snow has been constantly falling for the last ten days & still it has not abated; it is now some ten or twelve feet in this place (Canyan Creek²) & on the mountain tops, fifty or more, there is no passing or repassing at pres-

¹ December, 1852.

² Cañon Creek, a north branch of Trinity R., in Trinity Co., Cal.

ent, I am shut up in my room, the snow having completely blocked up both doors and windows, I therefore have lighted my candles & sat down to amuse myself & "while the tedious hours away" by giving you my narrative.

CHAPTER I

FROM THE WABASH RIVER¹ TO ST. LOUIS

We (that is George Westall Bethel Elliot, my husband² & myself) started for California on the 14th day of April, with five yoke of cattle one pony & sidesaddle, & accompanied by several of our friends & neighbors as far as the first town, where we parted & said our last *good by*, & turning westward which was to be our course for most of the way of our long journey.

The first night we put up at widdow womans, we did not camp out, all though we had intended to commence camping from the start, but it goes so much "agin the grane" at first, & then there is so many fine people passing & repassing along the road, while you are eating your meal on a log, or stump, or the end board of your waggon, with your tin plates tin cups &c. For my part I felt *kinder streaked*³ at first, especially while we traveled in the states. As I said we did not camp out the first night & having plenty of victuals with us went in made some tea, fried some eggs, eat our suppers, & were accomodated with a fine bed, which is a great luxury after a hard days travel; but my thoughts and reflections were such that I could not readily fall asleep. Who is there that does not recollect their first night when started on a long journey, the wellknown voices of our friends still ring in our ears, the parting kiss feels still warm uppon our lips, & that last seperating word *Farewell!* sinks deeply into the heart. It may be the last we may ever hear from some or all of them, & to those who start for California there can be no more solemn scene of parting only at death; for how many are now sleeping in death on the lonely plains whose Farewell was indeed their last.

[April 15 — 2d day] But to return, we started in the morning of our seckond day, a fine clear sky, but the roads rather muddy. Loyd⁴ killed ten plovers with 2 shots of his double barrel shotgun, which we dressed, & had a fine supper, which we cooked by a log in the wood where we camped for the night, about half a mile west of Ewington.⁵ We obtained lodging nearby, slept soundly started in the morning [April 16 — 3d day] after preparing our hasty meal; it soon commenced raining I kept in the waggon, we killed 2 ducks & some plovers, bought some butter, & at

¹ Little Wabash River of Illinois.

² Her husband was Lloyd Frizzell.

³ An Americanism with various meanings, — "ashamed," "disconcerted," etc.

⁴ Her husband.

⁵ Ewington, Effingham Co., Ill., twenty-nine miles northeast of Vandalia, on the west bank of the Little Wabash River. It was formerly the county seat and derived its name from Gen. W. L. D. Ewing, a prominent lawyer of Vandalia.

night having come about 21 miles we encamped had a fine supper, the proprietor of the place came down & spent the evening with us around our large fire, we went up to the house with him stayed 'till morning, yoked up our team started on our journey [April 17 — 4th day], killed 2 squirrels & some quails, 3 horse teams passed us to-day for California, we put up to-night 3 miles east of Greenville.¹

[April 18 — 5th day] To day Sunday passed through the beautiful town of Greenville which approached from the east has a very picturesque appearance from the hill which overlooks the town & surrounding country, Crossed Lookingglass Prairie² which is the most beautiful & fertile prairie I ever saw, but being so large it is but thinly settled, encamped on the west side of it, at a house, it being to late to reach the timber that night.

[April 19 — 6th day] Killed 3 squirrels traveled 22 miles encamped in a wood, slept in the waggon for the first time, passed through a small town this morning [April 20 — 7th day] as we proceeded on our journey, & about 10 o'clock we came to the pleasant town of C——ville,³ from there we had the pleasure of traveling on a fine plank road, we soon came in sight of the tall spires of the city of St. Louis,⁴ & there were other signs that we were approaching a great metropolis, there were gentlemen on the ponds⁵ fishing some gunning, & several little boys along the roadside with spear in hand, a sack thrown over their shoulder & with deliberate aim picked up every frog that dared to put their heads above the water. they were not doing this for sport or prehaps [sic] the frogs might have reproved them, but for proffit, I asked one little fellow what he got for his frogs? he said 3 bits⁶ a dozzen. About the middle of the day we arived on the bank of the Mississippi opposite St. Louis, encamped in sight of several waggons which we knew from appearances were for the same destination as ourselves, the horse teams which had passed us some days before soon came up, some of their party had been through before, & we intended to travel with them seeing that we could go as far in a day as they did, but circumstances prevented as you will soon see. The men all went over to the city, & returned in the evening with an account of the vast number of Californians (as we were called here) who were there outfitting & shipping &c.

[April 21 — 8th day] This morning we went down to the Ferry crossed over, & with much difficulty forced our way through the narrow streets which were crowded with drays, & the loose stalk which was being driven down to the ferry boat, but we made our way up to the place where

¹ Greenville, Bond Co., Ill., the county seat, situate on the East Fork of Big Shoal Creek.

² Looking Glass Prairie, a large, fine and undulating prairie, situate between Silver and Sugar Creeks, on the eastern border of St. Clair Co., Ill.

³ Collinsville, Madison Co., Ill.

⁴ They were near East St. Louis.

⁵ Indian Lake may be meant.

⁶ A colloquialism usually denoting a shilling, valued at twelve and a half cents. A long bit is fifteen cents and a short bit is ten cents.



Distant view of St. Louis.

we were to get our outfit, it was nearly opposite the postoffice, fortunately there was a pile of bricks lying on the side of the road which protected our team or I think they must have been run over. I choose to set in the waggon while they were trading; & never before did I see such bustle, & hear such a din as I did in those two hours, or ever see such a drama pass before me, for being in the immediate vicinity of the postoffice there were constantly passing in & out, a mixed multitude of all ages sex & condition, I amused myself by noticing them as they passed while I was unobserved in our huge covered waggon. Many of them as they came out with a letter would immediately break the seal and commence reading, although this subjected them to be run against by every passer by, but they did not seem to heed it, and when too much annoyed they would lean against the palings or set down in some sheltered spot. There was the man of business, whom you could distinguish by his brisk walk, important airs, fine dress & appearance, he would merely glance at the signature, put it in his pocket, & hurry back to his shop, but I noticed one old man as he broke open his letter & was reading it, appeared dejected; he would stop, and his mind would seem abstracted, for he heeded nothing which passed around him, it know [no] doubt contained unwelcome news. I thought it might have been the conduct of some profligate son, or perhaps of some disaster which affected his pecuniary condition. I also noticed a woman reading a letter as she walked along leading a small child, she appeared to be about 40 years of age, rather poorly clad; when she broke the seal she appeared aggitated, but she had not read far before she smiled & tears of joy ran down her cheeks, I could not mistake the mother or wife was there; & I conjectured with some probability that it was favorable news from a husband or son in California. But I will not attempt to discribe all I saw, but I must say that the noise & bustle of those two hours was enough to give one the headache it exceeded that of the levy of New-Orleans.

CHAPTER II

FROM ST. LOUIS TO ST. JOSEPH

At length it was decided that myself with the outfit should be shipped on board a steamer & sent to St. Joseph,¹ accordingly I was conveyed on board the Martha Jewett² which was loading with freight for that, & intermediate points, while the men with the team would proceed by land. The cabin of this well furnished & beautiful steamer was filled with passengers two thirds of whom were for California.

[April 22 — 9th day] Started up the river about 2, o'clock this after-

¹ On the Missouri River, from St. Louis to St. Joseph.

² The "Martha Jewett," of which W. C. Jewett was master, began her trips on the Missouri River in 1852. She was "one of the finest and most popular boats on the river in her day."

noon, the company being all strangers to me I felt quite lonesome, thought much about "those I left behind me."

[April 23 — 10th day] A man fell overboard this morning, he was a deck passenger going to California, broke two of his ribs, he is not expected to live, he has no family as I could learn. there are about 200 passengers on board for California.

[April 24 — 11th day] The man died last night, carried him on to Boonville¹ & buried him, I did not learn his name. We got on rather slowly for the boat is very heavily laden, there is some 100 head of cattle horses & mules on board, a good many among whom were those gentlemen with whom we had intended to travel having shipped their teams & waggons besides their other freight, & the river is quite low.

[April 25 — 12th day] Sunday quite sad although there were some 40 ladies on board, I have been reading the various guides of the rout to California, they have not improved my ideas of the *pleasure* of the trip, no very flattering accounts I assure you, but hope we may find it better, not worse.

[April 26 — 13th day] The country along the Mississouri [*sic*] most of the way, is quite broken, & hilly, many of the towns are small & uninteresting, but there are some, though not large which do a great deal of business. The scenery is quite monotonous.

[April 27 — 14th day] Passed the wreck of the steamer Luda,² which was blown up a short time since, it was a sad sight; for nearly 200 hundred lives were lost by that fatal accident, & the most of them I was told were for California. Men were at work digging from the hulk (which was nearly all that was left, so great was the explosion) such articles as were of value, or to ascertain if there were any dead bodies, to give them burial. I suppose they had found many for they had a line on which was hung promiscuously men, women, & children's clothes, it made ones heart ache to look upon such a sight, but what must be the feelings of those who should recognize amidst those wet & muddy articles, some well known garment, of relative or friend, whose body in death lies sleeping beneath the turbulent waters & sands, of the Mississouri [*sic*]. Passed the town of Kansas,³ here was some 60 waggons of the Sante Fee traders. Saw several indians here, one squaw on a beautiful white pony. This is a pretty place, we also passed Ft. Leavenworth⁴ which is pleasantly situated on an elevated plain, which affords a fine view, this as its name indicates is a military station. Saw several of the black war dogs⁵ standing around there, but I guess they have very little to bark at now.

¹ Boonville, the county seat of Cooper Co., Mo.

² The "Saluda," a side-wheel steamer with double engine and two boilers, having a capacity of 233 tons, was built in 1846. She exploded at Lexington, Mo., on the morning of April 9, 1852, only eighteen days prior to the above observation of Mrs. Frizzell. — *Chappell. History of the Missouri River, 1906, p. 52, 74.*

³ Kansas City.

⁴ Fort Leavenworth, two miles north of the city of Leavenworth, Kan., situate on Rattlesnake Hills, was first occupied as a cantonment in 1827, and became a regular fort of the U. S. government about 1832.

⁵ Cannon. — *Original note.*

[April 28 — 15th day¹] Arrived at St. Josep[h] this evening, the banks of the river & all around the town were white with waggon, & tents; while the people came running down to the wharf by hundreds, a great many came on board for their families, or to look for some expected friend; they would come to the cabin door, & with an anxious look survey all within, but if the ones they sought were there, it was but for a moment, before the eye of affection would recognize, the wife her husband, the daughter her father, the father by his whole family all rushing up to him to see who should be first caressed. They soon all left the boat excepting a few I was one as it was now dark, & it was reported that the tavern were all full.

[April 29 — 16th day] I left the boat this morning with a family with whom I had formed an agreeable acquaintance, who were going to California, & they having ascertained that it was impossible to get boarding in town, concluded to cross the river, & pitch their tent, & having a good sheet iron cooking stove & they would board themselves; & as their teams were coming by land & not expected for several days I was invited to go over with them which I accordingly did. We proceeded to the ferry, but could not cross for 2 hours for the crowd of teams which were in before us; while waiting there, some 200 indians of the Pawtawattimes & Winnebagoes² came down the street, affording me one of the strangest sights I ever saw. They were very dark complected, quite black, half clothed, & some few were ornamented; they had some 30 or 40 ponies which were laden as I should judge by the variety; with every thing that they possessed; for there were fastened on the top of the enormous loads which they carried, dogs, puppies, paupooses, chickens, & those who were unable to walk by reason of age or infirmity. One of the puppies thus confined kept yelping, probably from hunger, an old indian perhaps tired of hearing it, or thinking that it disturbed us, stepped up & shot it in the head with a blunt arrow & killed it, and then threw it in the river. They were in a hurry to cross over and crowded down to the waters edge, the ferrymen would not take but a few of them at a time for there was not room for the waggon, one old skua was as mad as a wet hen, she scolded a perfect storm, one of the men who stood by understood her, & interpreted to us what she said, & it served to amuse us not a little. Our turn now come we crossed over to the wild and uninhabited (except by indians) Territory of Nebraska. We soon had our tent up got some dinner, the indians came round the tent, some begging, some having a few articles to trade, and as they concluded a bargain or "swop" as they call it, they shake hands with all around and say, good, good, & then depart.

[April 30 — 17th day] Last night I slept but little, the indians had encamped not far from us, & they kept up a constant singing, or howling

¹ Mrs. Frizzell made an error at this point, numbering the day as the "18th", instead of 15th, which led to a misnumbering throughout. It has been corrected here.

² Potawatomi and Winnebago.

for it was the most doleful noise I ever heard, & they were passing around the tent, & some would pull open the door & peep in, I knew they had liquor, for I had seen several of them drunk, I was fearful what they might do, the strangeness of the scene & the wildness of the place, made me conjure up in my mind all the indian massacres of which I had ever read or heard, but the Major¹ & his family slept soundly, for he had been through before consequently he heeded them not, nor did I say a word, but was glad when day broke; my fears were dispelled with the darkness. Seated outside the tent I was amused watching the indians shoot with their bows & arrows for 5 or 10 cts that some men would put up for the purpose of seeing them shoot, or looking at them ride on their ponies in a manner that none but indians can; it is a novel sight to see them, their faces painted, or tattooed, wrapped in their red blankets with a kind of cap on their heads, & stuck in the top were from one to a dozen long feathers of various colors, & by a word to their ponies, for I seldom see them use a whip, they scamper away with the speed of the wind.

[May 1 — 18th day] Teams crossing the river all the while, but there is not half ferry boats enough here, great delay is the consequence, besides the pushing, & crowding, to see who shall get across first. There is every description of teams & waggon; from a hand cart & wheelbarrow, to a fine six horse carriage & buggy; but more than two thirds are oxen & waggon similar to our own; & by the looks of their loads they do not intend to starve. Most of the horses, mules & cattle, are the best the states afford; they are indeed beautiful, but I fear some of them will share the fate of the "gallant grey" of Snowdowns Knight.² [May 2 — 19th day] It being a very pleasant day we walked out toward the indian encampment, we saw a little way to our left a painted post, which the Major said denoted that an indian was buried there; we turned aside, found there were two graves on[e] of quite recent date, & recolecting that I had seen a coffin put on the ferryboat that day I came over I supposed this to be the same, deposited here, & that the noise I heard them making the following night, was the funeral dirge. There was one old grey headed indian here, but on approach, he wrapped his blanket around him, & without speaking, or seeming to take notice of us, walked off into the thickets, & disappeared. I looked after him as he turned away, & felt as if I was an intruder. There was an air of greatness about him, his tall and erect figure, & noble features; he had doubtless sat around the council fires of his tribe when they were many, before the white man had reduced their numbers to a mere handful, & perhaps this one now laid low, might have been the last belonging to him; no doubt but he could "a tale unfold," of the events of bygone years. But we proceeded onward & found that they had nearly all packed up and gone, some of the squaws were mounted on their little ponies 2 on each, seated on

¹ An original note names him "Major Stemmons, of Rockport, Mo." This is evidently an error for *Stemmons*, a family-name that is yet found in Atchison County.

² An allusion to the Knight of Snowdown in Scott's *The Lady of the Lake*.

opposite sides, so as to ballance. We turned to the tent, heard that the Majors teams had arrived in town, & would be over in the morning. [May 3—20th day] A place having been found at a private house where I could be accommodated for a few days, I recrossed the river, went to the house where I was to stay, until the team came which I most anxiously wished for, as the numbers which passed over daily, seemed to me so great that we should be behind, for there are a like number crossing at several other points at the same time.

[May 4 to 7—21st to 24th days] Began to look for the team, but manny said, it would take at least 18 or 20 days to come from St. Louis here, looked quite hard to-day.

[May 8—25th day] This morning I went out walked up a hill which overlooks the town & river, never saw such a bustle, there was a large drove of cattle filling the streets for some distance, which they were crossing to the other side as fast as possible, with their little boats, where there should have been at least 2 good large steam ferry boats, & I should think that they could afford to build them, or charter them from some other ports, this I know & all others who have experienced it, that it is a great vexation to keep ones team standing for a day or two in the street, & watch your chance to get ferried over, for the press is so great that they will slip in before you if they can. I saw several teams approaching the town, & I suppose I saw ours, for they came in about that time, but I did not see the grey pony. (which I afterwards learned they had sold her back getting sore) nor the blue steer which had died concluded it was not them, returned to the house, & thought if it was them they would soon be in, but as it proved the letter which I had deposited in the P. O., informing them of my whereabouts, was nailed upon the door, & had been covered over by others of more recent date, I had also left word with the commission merchant to whom the goods were shipped that I was going over the river to stay several days perhaps [sic] until they came; if not I would leave a line there, or in the P. O. Loyd got this word, & not finding any line in the office, immediately crossed the river & searched for me for several miles out on the road.

[May 9—26th day] Sunday I sat at the window observing every team & every person, for I thought surely they would come to day, while they at the same time were looking as hard for me. Loyd having got no tidings of me over the river; went to every church in the town, & looked if I was there, but not seeing me, he went to the P. O. once more, & tearing off some score of letters he found the desired information, & in a few moments he was at the door; & "the lost was found," all was soon explained, we eat our dinner, which was to be out last at a table for some time. We went down, crossed over the river, after having procured several articles to complete our outfit, found our team already on the opposite bank ready to start, our other team from Calhoun Co.¹ was in

¹ Calhoun Co., Ill.

waiting to accompany us, they had fallen in company with our folk & George¹ being acquainted with them, & as we had never heard from Mr. Besser we were glad of their company, but there was no woman with them, but 5 men one waggon 4 yoke of splendid cattle, they were merry fellows and as we came up they joked us not a little about our looking for each other at the same time. & congratulated us upon our success.

CHAPTER III

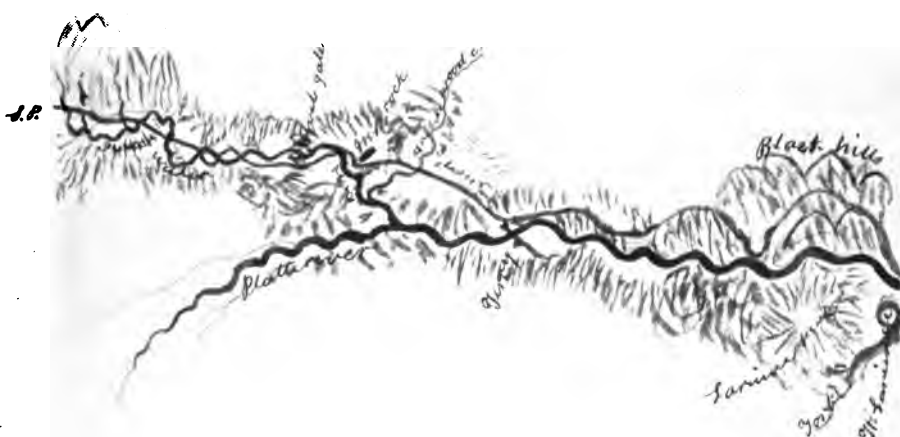
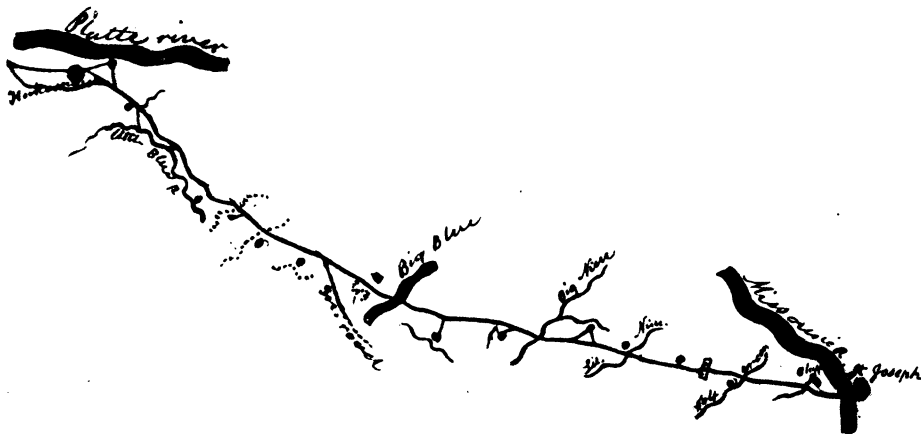
FROM ST. JOSEPH TO FT. KEARNEY

Come now with me gentle reader, and let us cross the plains, I will endeavor to show you whatever is worth seeing, & tell you as much as you will care about hearing, while you are comfortably seated around your own fireside, without fatigue, or exposure, I will conduct you the whole of this long & weary journey, which I wish if you should ever in reality travel, that you may feel no more fatigue than you do at the present moment, but I fear that you would, as you yourself will probably admit before the close of this narrative. This is considered the starting point² from this river is time reckoned, & it matters not how far you have come, this is the point to which they all refer, for the question is never, when did you leave home? but, when did you leave the Missouri [sic] river? Our team looked bad one ox had died, the roads through Missouri were muddy & bad. It was about 2 o'clock as we started out through the heavy timbered bottom which extends back some 7 or 8 miles from the river, & which was to be the last of any note until we reached the Sierra Nevada Mts. It seems hard to believe, but it is nevertheless true, that this immense distance is nearly destitute of timber, particularly near the road. It commenced raining a little, we reached the outskirts of the timber, called the bluffs, as the land raises here, we encamped pitched our tent, soon had a large fire, got supper, turned the cattle out to graze on the grass & bushes, for they were very hungry & devoured whatever came in their way, they soon filled themselves & they were drove up & tied each one by a rope, to the waggon, or bushes nearby. There were several campfires burning in sight, we at length went to bed, Loyd & I occupied the waggon, while the boys slept in the tent, I had bought rag carpet enough to spread over the ground in the tent which proved excellent for keeping the wet, or sand, from getting on the bedding, which consisted of buffalo robes & blankets, which I consider the best for this journey, as they keep cleaner & do not get damp so easily as cotton quilts.

[May 10 — 27th day] Stayed in camp to-day unloaded our waggon put every thing that it was possible in sacks leaving our trunk chest, barrels & boxes, which relieved the waggon, of at least, 300 lbs, besides it was much more conveniently packed. Water being handy, we washed up all our things & prepared to start soon in the morning. A boy about

¹ One of her sons.

² St. Joseph, Mo.



THREE ROUTE MAPS
ST. JOSEPH TO FT. KEARNY—FT. KEARNY TO FT. LARAMIE
FT. LARAMIE TO SOUTH PASS

12 years old came to our tent poorly clad, he said he was going back, I asked him several questions, & learned that he had ran away from his folks who lived in the eastern part of Ohio, had got his passage from one Steamboat to another, until he had reached St. Jo.¹ & then had got in with some one to go to California, but he said they would not let him go any further, & sent him back, I gave him something to eat & told him to go back to his parents, I know not where he went but from his tale this was not the first time that he had ran away from home. What a grief to parents must such children be.

[May 11 — 28th day] Fine morning, started out on the Plain which appeared boundless, stretching away to the south & covered with excellent grass 5 or 6 inches high, but they were not near so level as I had supposed, quite undulating like the waves of the sea when subsiding from a storm, In 6 or 8 ms,² we came to where there was a general halt, some dozen teams standing here waiting to cross a deep slue,³ in which one team & waggon were stuck & were obliged to unload part of their goods, it being difficult to attach more team to it where it then was, some others taking the precaution doubled theirs before starting in, but noticed that the great difficulty was in the cattle not pulling together, we drove in just above them, passed over, went on our way which for many miles is often in sight of the Missouri *[sic]* river and the highlands on the opposite bank to the cultivated fields of which I often turned a "lingering look" which is the last I have as yet seen, or may see for some time, with one exception which I shall soon relate. We met two or three indians, saw a fresh made grave, a feather bed lying upon it, we afterwards learned that a man & his wife had both died a few days before, & were buried together here, they left 2 small children, which were sent back to St. Joseph by an indian chief. We now came to Wolf creek,⁴ a small stream but very steep banks, the indians have constructed a kind of bridge over it, & charged 50 cts per waggon, there were several of them here, quite fine looking fellows, not near so dark as those I had seen, but of the real copper color, said they were of the Sacs & Fox tribes.⁵ One was a chief, he was dressed in real indian stile, had his hair shaved off all except the crown lock, which was tied up & ornamented with beads & feathers, he, & one or two others, had various trinkets upon their arms, legs, & heads, but their main dress was their bright red blankets, There were several teams here, which were passing over before us, when one of the teams getting stalled on the opposite bank, which was steep & muddy, a little pert looking indian jumped up comenced talking & jesticulating in great earnest; on inquiring what it was he said? an interpreter nearby said, he was saying to the driver, that if he could not go through there he could not go to California, he had better go back home. We passed over

¹ St. Joseph, Mo.

² Abbreviation used throughout for "miles."

³ A variant of "slough."

⁴ Wolf Creek, a tributary of the Missouri, rises in Brown Co. and runs through Doniphan Co., Kan.

⁵ Sauk and Fox, from this northeastern section of Kansas.

when our turn came, & went a short distance up the stream, & encamped; having come about 20 ms, fine grass here, & some small timber along the banks of this creek, I had a severe headache this evening, our folks having got their supper, they were soon seated around a blazing fire, & were soon joined by several indians, who likewise seated themselves by the fire, & as one of them could speak a little English, they kept up quite a conversation. They said they no steal white mans cattle, they good indian, but the Pawnee he bad indian, he steal, no good, Loyd gave them a drink of brandy which when they had tasted, said strong, strong, but smacked their lips as if it was not stronger than they liked. I lay in the waggon looked out upon this group, which as the glare of the fire fell on the grim visages, & bare, brawny arms, & naked bodies; having nothing on the upper part of the body but their loose blanket, & as they move their arms about when speaking, their bodies are half naked most of the time, the contrast was striking between their wild looks & savage dress, to the familiar faces of our own company, & their civilized dress and speech. [May 12 — 29th day] I felt quite well this morning, we soon dispatched our breakfast, yoked up our cattle which were as full as ticks, started out into the broad road, or roads, for here there are several tracks, there is plenty of room for horse, or mule teams to go around, which will be quite different when we come to the Mountains, we passed the indian mission,¹ where there are several hundred acers of land cultivated by indians under the superintendence of the missionaries. Rested our teams at noon, took a lunch, went on some 10 miles farther [*sic*], & encamped, where there was good grass, but very little water & no wood, we succeeded in boiling the tea kettle, & making some coffee, & having plenty of bread, meat, & crackers, fruit pickles, &c, we done very well for supper, it was quite cold tonight, but slept well till morning.

[May 13 — 30th day] Started out soon this morning, passed several graves, we hear that it is sickly on the route, that there are cholera, small-pox, & measles, but rumor says so much, that you do not know when to believe her, but the graves prove that some have died, & it must be expected that from such a number, some would die; but it is very sad to part with them here, for the heart can hardly support the addition, of so much grief, for there are few whose hearts are not already pained, by leaving so many behind. We came to another indian toll bridge, which crossed a small ravine, charged but 25 cts, two indians here, went on till near night and encamped for the night, very good place, in a hollow to the left of the road. George caught some small fish with a pinhook. [May 14 — 31st day] Soon in the morning we renewed our journey, through a fine rotting² prairie, small groves of timber along the water courses, giving the landscape a very picturesque appearance; saw several graves to day, passed where they were burying a man, crossed the little

¹ This seems to refer to the Presbyterian mission among the Iowas and the Sauk and Fox, established in 1837, near the present town of Highland, Doniphan Co., Kan.

² So in the original and evidently an error for "rolling" or undulating.

Nimahaw,¹ a fine stream, encamped on the bank. We had not been here long, when a little white calf came up to us out of the bushes, & appeared very hungry; it had probably been left on purpose, though most of them are gennerally killed, but he might have been hid in the bushes, & people are not very tenderhearted on this journey, but he reminded me so much of home I would not let them shoot it; we left it there to be devoured by wolves, or die of hunger, or be killed by some one else. [May 15 — 32d day] We renewed our journey, when about noon it commenced to rain we turned down to the right, & encamped, it continuing rainy, we staid till next day; here was a small stream full of little fishes, which if we had had a small sceine, we might have caught any amount; but we had not so much as a fish hook, which we had forgotten to provide.

[May 16 — 33d day] Crossed the Big Nimahaw,² nooned here, there were so many teams here crossing that we had to wait some 2 hours, for many would not go through, until they had doubled their team; but we crossed with our 4 yoke of small cattle, & the largest waggon there, without any difficulty, but a little snug pulling; George said we done it *easy*; our team is certainly no. 1. This is a fine mill stream, some very good timber on its banks, & as rich prairie around as I ever saw, there is no reason why it should not be settled some day. We passed the junction of the Indipendence road,³ there was as many teems in sight, as on ours, & their track looked about the same, Saw a fine sheet iron stove sitting beside the road, took it along cooked in it that night, & then left it; for they are of very little account, unless you could have dry wood. We met a man who was driving several cows, the men in the other waggon recognized 4 of them, belonging to a man from their country, with whom they had intended to travel. They asked the man where was the owner of the cows? & why he was driving them back? he said first that he was the owner, & that he had bought them; but as he could not tell where the man was, nor discribe him, they concluded he had no right to them; & finaly he said them four he had found, & they took them away from him; & as one of them gave milk, we were enable[d] to live quite well; & I would advise all to take cows on this trip, if you used the milk only to make bread, for you can do very little with yeast, & the soda & cream tarter I do not like.

[May 17 — 34th day] We went on through a rich & fertile country, & encamped some 2 ms to the left of the road, in one of the most wild and romantic places I ever saw; the wolves howled around the tent nearly all night, I could not sleep soundly, therefor dreamed of being attacked by bears, & wolves; when the sharp bark of one, close to the waggon, would rouse me from my fitful slumbers but the rest slept so soundly,

¹ The Little Nemaha R., in the southeastern corner of Nebraska, and empties into the Missouri seven miles below Brownsville.

² Nemaha or Big Nemaha R., in the southeastern part of Nebraska, emptying into the Missouri two miles below Rulo.

³ This is a mistake, did not pass it till 2 days afterwards. — *Original note.*

that they hardly heard them; for people sleep in general very sound, on this trip, for being tired at night, they feel like reposing.

[May 18 — 35th day] Proceeded onward, crossed the Big Blue river¹ there was a ferry here, but we forded it, although it came near running into our waggon bed; came on some 11, ms. father [sic], & encamped, to the left, down in a hollow where there was small stream; Here² a doctor from the same place of those men who were travelling with us, came up, he had started to pack through with 2 horses, but soon getting tired of it, he had let a man have one of the horses, & provisions, to take him through: but he said they soon wanted him to help about every thing & he got tired of it; & offered to go through with them, & cook for them, they concented, as one of their company had gone back which I had forgotten to mention, for we meet some going back every day, some have been sick, some say that they are carrying the mail; but there is most to great a number for that purpose. [May 19 — 36th day] Beautiful morning the Dr. said I could ride his horse if I liked, & having my saddle yet, I gladly excepted it; for it is tiresome riding in the waggon all the while, & every waggon should be provided, with at least one good horse, for the company to ride when they are weary, or when they wish to go out & hunt; for it is very hard to go off from the road a hunting, & perhaps kill some game, & then have it to carry & overtake the teams; for as slow a[s] an ox team may seem to move, they are very hard to catch up with, when you fall behind an hour or two. and you need a horse also, to ride through & drive the team in all bad places, & to get up your cattle without getting your feet wet, by wading in water or dew; if such exposures as these were avoided, I do not think there would be as much sickness as there usually is, along here, for we have not passed less than 100 fresh graves from St. Joseph to the Blue river. See some dead stalk, the wolves have a feast, hope they will not disturb the graves. [May 20 — 37th day] We travel about 20 ms. a day our cattle are thriving, look well; but this Gypsy life is anything but agreeable, it is impossible to keep anything clean, & it is with great difficulty that you do what little you have to do. Turned down to the left; tolerable grass only; here we saw the first buffalo sign; the wolves kept barking all night. [May 21 — 38th day] Raining some, came 7 or 8 ms, the rain still continuing, we put up for the day, down to the left, near a dry sandy creek, here was a fresh grave; there being some timber along this creek, we soon had a large fire, & prepared our dinner. We have not as yet seen any game, & a fishhook would have been of more service so far, than half a dozen guns, The weather is quite cold, need overcoats, & mittens. [May 22 — 39th day] Again we get up the cattle & start on; the land here is poor, the country flat, & grass only in places, the road is very crooked thus far; for the track runs

¹ The Big Blue R., an affluent of the Kansas R., rising in Nebraska and running nearly southward into Kansas.

² This is a mistake — did not join us till 3 days after this. — *Original note.* This doctor's name is nowhere given in her journal.

wherever it is nearest level. We encamped on the Little blue,¹ which we had been following up for the last 3 or 4 days, it is a poor place for grass. Some teams turned back a day or two since, & one old lady said we had all better turn back, for if the grass began to give out now, what would become of us if we went on until our teams were not able to take us back; she said she was going back, for she had made a living before she had ever heard of California, & the rest might go on & starve their teams to death if they liked. Saw the heads of [s]everal fine large fish lying here, but could not catch any with a pin-hook. [May 23 — 40th day] After some difficulty, we got our cattle from the other side of the river, where they had strayed during the night, but when we found they were across, some of the men went over & watched them, which was the first time we had watched them, but being now in the Pawnee country we were a little afraid they might be stolen, but we did not see one of these indians, some said it was because they were afraid of the smallpox. We passed a spot where there was a board put up, & this information upon it, that a man was found here on the 17th, horribly murdered, with wounds of a knife, & buckshot, his shirt was lying there, with the blood & wounds upon it, he was buried near by, it stated by whom &c. I have never learned any more, but I hope the murderer may meet his reward, sooner or later. [May 24 — 41st day] The day being clear & still, as we passed over the 16 mile desert, to the head waters of the L. Blue²; we saw a mirage, at first we thought we were near a pond of water which we saw just over the ridge, & remarked that the guide had said there was no water here; but when we came near, it was gone, and then suspecting what it was, we looked around (for here you can see any distance in all directions) we saw beautiful streams, bordered with trees, small lakes, with islands, & once on looking back, we saw several men in the road, who looked to be 15 ft tall, & once or twice we saw what appeared to be large & stately buildings. Met a company of fur traders with 16 waggons loaded with buffalo robes, they were very singular in appearance looking like so many huge elephants, & the men, except 2, were half breeds; & indians, & a rougher looking set, I never saw; & their teams which were cattle, looked about used up; quite warm to day, crossed the last branch of the Little Blue, it was dry and good crossing, we went on some 3 miles, and encamped near some small ponds of water, no wood, only what we could find at old camping places; we had brought a little water in our kegs, made some coffe[e], & just as we were done supper, the sun was declining in the west, making things[s] appear very distinctly on the horizon, when there was an animal discovered, feeding on the plain, not far distant. 2 of our men went in persuit, and after some time, returned with a quarter of fresh meat, which they said was antelope; but asking them why they did not bring more, & they making rather a vague reply,

¹ The Little Blue R. rises in the southern part of Nebraska, runs through Jefferson Co., thence into the State of Kansas, and empties into the Big Blue R. in Marshall Co., of that state.

² Little Blue R.

and not being anyways anxious to have any of it cooked, & from certainly looks which they exchanged, I began to think something was wrong about it, at length one went out in the morning [May 25 — 42nd day] and found it to be an old sheep left from some drove, which was probably unable to travel, but the sport was that they thinking it was an antelope, and it being so dark that they could not see distinctly, & knowing that they were hard to get a shot at, they crept on their hands & knees for some distance, both fired at the same time, & shot the poor sheep through & through; but to turn the joke, they brought up a piece, to have the Dr. & me¹ cook some of it, but failed. This made us something to joke & laugh about for some time, for it is seldom that you meet with anything for merriment, on this journey. We reached the Platte river,² after a hard days drive, although the sand hills which were in sight, soon after we started in the morning; did not seem to be, but 2 or 3 ms. distant. Saw several antelope but could not get a shot at them it being so level. There is no wood here, except what is procured from the island, the river was not fordable at this time, but some swam accross on horseback & procured some; but with much difficulty and danger, the current being very swift, & the bottom quicksand; we contented ourselves with a few willow bushes; there were some buffalo chips, but we had not as yet got in the way of using them. [May 26 — 43d day] We are about 5, ms below Ft. Kearney.³ Several indians of the Sioux tribe came to our tent, the best looking indians I ever saw, they were tall, strongly made, firm features, light copper color, cleanly in appearance, quite well dressed in red blankets, and highly ornamented, with bows and arrows in their hands. We gave them some crackers & coffee, with which they seemed very much pleased. They signified that they wished to trade, & pointing of to the right, we saw, many more indians seated on the ground not far distant, with some 20 ponies feeding around them, as we started out there, we saw a train of waggons which were passing, halt, & appear to be perplexed, we soon saw the cause, a huge indian, naked to his waist, with a drawn sword, brandishing it in the road, & seemed to say, "stand & deliver." But when we came up, he signified that he wished to trade, but they wishing to proceed, & not wanting to be detained, they gave him some crackers &c, each waggon as they passed, throwing him something on a blanket, which he had spread on the ground beside the road; but I saw the indians chuckle to one another, upon the success of the old chiefs maneuver. This old chief accompanied us to the rest of the indians, & he gave the doctor a buffalo robe for his vest, which he immediately put on, buttoned it up, and appeared much pleased with his bargain; but not better than the doctor did with his. We also got a very fine robe,

¹ These words are partly erased in the original manuscript.

² The Platte or Nebraska R., and well-known affluent of the Missouri R. Her description is similar to Frémont's, in his first exploration of ten years earlier. — Frémont. *Report*. Washington, 1845, p. 16.

³ Fort Kearny, Nebraska, named after Col. Stephen W. Kearny who, in 1845, conducted the first military expedition through the West, from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains. It was at first named Fort Childs, in honor of Gen. Thomas Childs, of the Mexican War. The post was abandoned permanently in 1871.

for a bridle & mantingals [*sic*], which were not very new. We struck our tent, moved on up to the fort; there are 2 or 3 good frame building here, saw some children playing in the porch of one of them, suppose there are some families here but the barracks & magazines are mostly built of turf; the place is not inclosed, & presents no striking appearance, but we liked to look at a house as it had been some time since we had seen one, and would be some time before we should see another. They kept a register here, of the number of waggons which passed, there had then passed 2657, & as many waggons pass without touching here, I do not think they can keep a correct account, & I do not think they try to get the number of those that pass on the north side of the river, for it would be difficult to do. Opposite the town, & extending up & down the river for 16 or 18 ms, is an island,¹ it is covered with a fine growth of cottonwood timber, I was struck with its appearance with the mirage which I had seen on the plain, & believe it the same reflected by the atmosphere.

CHAPTER IV

FROM FT. KERNEY TO FT. LARIMIE

Leaving our letters in the P. O. went on some 10 or 12 ms. & stoped for the night, there was no wood, & was not likely to be fore some distance according to the guides. [May 27 — 44th day] The grass being poor, & no wood, & believing that it was better on the north side, & I guess our cattle thought so too, for they all got into the river last night & started to swim across, but after a while they give it up & come out. we concluded to cross the river at the first ford we came to. We had proceeded some 4 or 5 ms. up the river; when we saw several waggons standing on the bank, & the men watching something in the water; we soon saw there was a waggon & team fording the river, we could hardly descerne the team which was nearly under the water, and the waggon looked like a little boat, it was preceeded by two men on horseback, who rode side by side, surveying out the ford & marking it by sticking up little sticks in the sand; we watched them till they were safely across, & the pilots had returned, but there was a board stuck up here which informed us, that the ford was safe, & that a large train had passed the day before. I felt a little nervous when we were about to cross, for the river here is all of one mile & a half wide, & a more foaming maddenng river I never saw, & its banks being very low, & the water the color of soapsuds you cannot see the bottom where it is not more than six inches deep, consequently looks as deep as the Missouri when it is bank full, & the many islands & bars which obstruct this swift current makes an awful noise, you cannot make a person hear you, when you are in the river, at 5 yds. distant; and I call this one of the greatest adventures on the whole route,

¹ Judging from the length of miles, the reference seems to be to the group of islands of which Long Island, opposite Kearney, Neb., is the largest.

for from the quicksands giving away under the waggon wheels, there is danger of upsetting, which would be a very great disaster indeed. Blocking up our waggon bed, we started in, for our cattle do not mind mud, or water, the men with their coats, hats, & boots off, with a kerchief around their heads, with whip in hand, into the Platte river we go; but we are only one team in 20 that is now in the river, making a line from bank to bank; we were about 2 hours in crossing, & I do not think our team pulled as hard & for so long a time on the road, at any place; for our waggon was heavy loaded with about 15 hundred lbs, & the wheels sunk in the sand about 6 inches most of the way, but we did not stop but once, for fear the waggon would get fast in the yielding sands, for there were 2 or 3 teams stuck, when we crossed, 2 were mule teams, their feet being so small they sank in the sands & could not pull out; but when we got across, one of the men who traveled with us, went back & pulled out one team; but there was no one anxious to go in a second time. There being abundance of grass here, we turned out our cattle after they had rested a little, but there was know [no] wood, so after changing their clothes, & passing around the brandy freely; we hiched up an went on some 4 miles fater [sic] up the river, & encamped in a beautiful place, on the bank of a stream called Elm creek,¹ under the shade of two large elm trees; here was good grass, plenty of the best of wood, & some water, for the creek was very low, & as the sun was 3 hours high or more, some went out a hunting while the old Dr² Beth & I went to cooking, we soon had the best of a fire, cooked some meat & beens, stewed some apples & peaches, boiled some rice, & baked buiscuit, & fried some crulls, & as I had a glass pickle jar full of sour milk, & plenty of salaratus, I had as fine cakes as if I had been at home; & when they returned in the evening we had a general feast; for we had had no wood to cook with before for several days, the men had seen plenty of game but the time did not permit of their pursuing it, saw also deer Elk and buffalo tracks. [May 28 — 45th day] We started out, but I would gladly have stayed today, rested & cooked some more, for the guides said we would have no more wood for 200 ms, & we must now take to "picking up chips."³ When a few miles out we came to a very bad slue, deep & muddy, it would be a fortune to some one to bridge it, it could be easily done, for it is not wide & the timber could be had on Elm creek which is but a few miles back, & any one would rather pay a reasonable toll, than to pull his team (cattle) so hard. Saw several head of stalk [*i. e.*, stock] which had give out, one old cow by the road with a paper pined on her head, it stated that she had been left to die, but if anyone choose, they might have her, but requested that they would not abuse her as she had been one of the best of cows, she looked so pittiful, & it called up so many assotiations in my mind that

¹ Elm Creek, a northern affluent of the Platte River, west of Fort Kearny, in the present Dawson Co., Neb.

² The doctor's name is nowhere revealed. Beth was one of her sons.

³ Buffalo-chips, the dried dung of the American bison.

it affected me to tears. Drove on and encamped; turned out the cattle & put up the tent, then for a fire, no wood, but *chips* in abundance, no alternative, soon had a large pile of them, & set fire to them, when they immediately blazed up & burned like dry bark, it was laughable to see the boys jump around it, particularly Beth & saying it "wooled them" bad. On saying that I feared the dust would get in the meat, as it was frying, George said he would as soon have his broiled as any way, so laughing, & jokeing we forgot our antipathies to the fire some said it had improved all the supper, even the coffee. [May 29 — 46th day] Hear of people killing buffalo, the ground is strewed with their bones. Passed a prairie dog town,¹ killed two, that we might have a near view of them; they resemble both the squirrel & puppy, teeth feet and tail like the squirrel their shape is more like that of a puppy; their color is redish grey, their size about twice that of a fox squirrel, some pronounce them good to eat, they bark nearly like a little puppy but their note is quicker & more like a squirrel, as we first came in sight, they comenced barking & running from hole to hole, & it is believed that they are all connected by subteraneous passages, which is probably the case, for they are not but a few feet apart, and on the near approach of any one, they will "disappear in a twinkling," & appear as if they turn a summerset right down into their hole. They set up straight on their hind feet when they bark, & they are so near the color of the sand that you can hardly see them, unless in motion. Shot a young hare, which made us a fine dinner. The water along here is very poor; the river water is said to be healthiest, but it is warm, & muddy.

[May 30 — 47th day] The road is along the bank of the river, which is very straight, & on each side of which, are high sandhills or bluffs, from 2 to 10 ms. distant from the river, it is the same the whole way, & you can see no fater [*sic*] on either side than these miniature mountains, for they present in many places a beautiful outline; [May 31 — 48th day] the scenery along the river is very monotonous & the weather is quite warm, & the diarrhia prevails to some extent among the emigrants, we are all slightly affected it is no doubt owing to the quality of the water, for most of it, is impregnated more or less with alkali. [June 1 — 49th day] One of our company quite sick to-day. The grass is very good along here, looks like a meadow. Saw four buffalo feeding near the bluffs, some 3 ms. distant, 2 of our party, & another man, went in persuit; this man killed one of them, & they brought what they could to the wag-gons, & left the remainder of it to the wolves. We came on & encamped to the right, on the west bank of a beautiful stream, I think called Buffalo creek,² we made some soup from the marrow bone of our fresh meat, which I think an epicure would have called good, and eating this with boiled rice helped us very much. Here is signs of game in abundance, elk, deer, buffalo, antelope, hare, &c,

¹ The species *Cynomys Ludovicianus*, whose burrow-towns were common east of the Rocky Mountains.

² Buffalo Creek, a northern affluent of the Platte River, in Nebraska.

[June 2 — 50th day] The bluffs in this place approach the river, & the road passes over them for 6 ms, the sand is from 6 to 15 inches in depth, it being very warm, & such hard pulling that our cattle lolled their tongues out for breath; we stoped when we came down to the river, & nooned. Passed on, saw a train which was stoped & digging a grave for a woman, who had died this morning, having been taken sick only last night; she leaves a husband & 2 small children, this is sad at any time, but much more so here. On a little father [*sic*], an old man was suddenly taken with the cholera, by drinking a draught of cold water from a spring, the Dr. stoped with him an hour or two, but thought he would not live; I never heard from him again.

[June 3 — 51st day] Had a fine shower of rain last night, which has laid the dust, & the road is level, & it is fine traveling to-day, nooned opposite Cedar Bluffs,¹ which are on the south side of the river, & the little dwarf cedars which grow upon them, are all the trees that I have seen for many mile, & shall see again very soon.

[June 4 — 52d day] Passed where they were burying a man; scarce a day but some one is left on these plains, to return to their mother dust; may the Lord pity, & bless the widows & orphans, who are left behind.

[June 5 — 53d day] Nooned nearly opposite Castle Bluffs,² here we were joined by 2 teams, a man & his family, & his widowed sister with her family, she was going only to Salt Lake, they had 5 or 6 cows which gave milk, they gave me an excellent one to milk, for they had more than they could well tend to, & we were willing that they should travel with us, which they did to the end of our journey.

[June 6 — 54th day] Most of the soil here is very barren, the wild sage sets in here it is very small, not much wood about this. Came in sight of Courthouse³ and Chimney⁴ rocks some 30 or 40 miles distant, they have a beautiful appearance. Passed some bluffs on our right which presented a very singular & picturesque appearance, resembling a ruined wall & buildings. A few miles onward to the left we found good camping. In a tent near by was a man very sick, the Dr. went & stayed with him till morning [July 7 — 55th day], when he died, leaving a wife & one child, they put him in his narrow bed & left him there to sleep (rest) alone. Traveled about 25 ms, & encamped on the bank of the river opposite Chimney rock, which appeared to us to be very near the other bank of the river but I am told it is 3 ms. distant & that is why it did not look larger to me, but I knew it was much larger than it seemed to be there, for when we were 10 ms distant it did not appear any smaller & not much

¹ Perhaps near Cedar Point, Keith Co., Neb.

² Not definitely located, but perhaps in Keith Co., Neb., between the North Platte and South Platte Rivers.

³ Courthouse Rock, a huge mass of sand and clay, near Pumpkin Creek, in Cheyenne County, Neb. There is a good description of it in Delano's *Life on the Plains* (1854), p. 69-70.

⁴ Chimney Rock, near the western boundary of Cheyenne County, Neb. Its height, in 1832, as given by Captain Bonneville, was 175 yards. — Irving's *The Rocky Mountains*. Phila., 1837, vol. 1, p. 45. It has become greatly reduced in height by erosion. — Chittenden's *Hist. of American Fur Trade*, vol. 1, p. 467. For a description and view in 1842, see Frémont's *Report*. Washington, 1845, p. 38.

farther off. There was a man very sick in a tent near by, supposed to be cholera.

[June 8 — 56th day] A fine cool breeze from the mountains makes it very pleasant. Passed a large prairie dog town it was about 2 ms long by one broad, they kept up a wonderful barking, & running from house to house, but disappeared on our approach & kept perfectly still, until we got a little passed, when they would jump up, & stand as straight & bark with all their might, & no doubt they were saying some very hard things against us, for the boys shot several of them, although I begged them not to hurt them, for it is pitiful to see them when one is wounded or killed outside, & cannot get into his hole; others will rush out, & drag him in, when they will commence barking with all their might, & directly the whole town join in, as if they had been informed, & understood that one of their number was wounded or dead. If there were any of these little animals in Ireland, we might easily account for their legends of Fairies, Elfs &c. And I think if their habits were thoroughly studied, that they would be found to possess wonderful powers of instinct.

[June 9 — 57th day] Came in sight of Laramie Peak,¹ its dark outline resting against the clouds had a sublime appearance. Passed where they were digging a grave for a girl 12 years old; how hard it must be to leave ones children on these desolate plains, but "God will watch over all their dust till He shall bid it rise." [June 10 — 58th day] To-day & yesterday the roads very sandy & in some places hilly, had a small shower of rain, turned down to the river, nearly 2 miles from the road, found excellent wood, which had been drifted there by the river in high water, & likewise fine grass. We are about 5 ms. from Ft. Laramie.² Near by where we nooned to-day, there was 2 dead indians in the top of a cottonwood tree,³ this being their manner of disposing of their dead. They were wraped in well dressed buffalo hides, & then lashed to several small poles, which were fastened to the limbs of the tree, it was a very singular sight, they must have been there some time, as I found a part of an old rusty knife, which had probably been one of the many things which had been hung on the tree, such as, knife, bow & arrow, & whatever he might have posessed. [June 11 — 59th day] We started out in the morning for town, reached it about 9 o'clock or rather opposite the place, we halted a little while, one of the company rode over & put some letters in the P. O. This is quite a place, several fine buildings, nestled here among the hills it looks like a rose in the wilderness. There were several indian lodges not far from the road, & plenty of indians. Taking a last look of the town we departed on our journey.

¹ Laramie Peak, the highest point of the Laramie Mountains of Wyoming, altitude 9020 feet.

² Fort Laramie, at the confluence of the North Platte and Laramie Rivers, Wyoming, was named after Joseph Laramé (or La Ramie), a trapper who lost his life here in 1821. Near by was an earlier station of the American Fur Company, known successively as Fort William and Fort John. A near view, as seen in 1842 by Frémont, is in his *Report*. Washington, 1845, opp. p. 40. The federal government bought out the trading company in 1849 and Fort Laramie became a military station; a birdseye view of the latter year is in H. H. Bancroft's *Works*, vol. 25, p. 690. For a full history of the fort, see Coutant's *Hist. of Wyoming*, vol. 1, p. 296-329.

³ One of the many mortuary customs of the Indians, known as tree-burial.

CHAPTER V

FROM FT. LARAMIE TO THE SOUTH PASS

We now turned to the right, & commenced ascending the black hills,¹ the scenery is wild & magnificent, the contrast was delightful, we encamped in a most romantic spot, where not far distant a fine spring of cold water rushed out of the mountain; this was refreshing, and our cattle climbed [*sic*] the hills to feed upon the rich seeded grasses which grow in bunches on their sides. The ground is covered with the richest profusion, & variety of flowers, but all were strange to me, except the wild rose which was the only one which was sweet sented. [June 12 — 60th day] The roads here are smooth & excellent, but hilly, & in some places very steep, it is so hard that it is bad on the cattle's feet, & waggon. Passed where they were digging a grave for a woman, who had died that morning, leaving a husband & 2 small children. She rests in a lovely spot, in sight, & opposite Laramie Peak, & surrounded with hills. Came to a good spring of water, & encamped quite early. Two of our men went out hunting, & succeeded in killing an antelope, & a mountain hare; we soon took their jackets off, & another such a broiling, boiling & roasting you never saw, there being more than our company wanted, we let our nearest neighbors have 2 quarters. we staid here until the next day noon, it being sunday. [June 13. — 61st day] We drove about 10 ms. & encamped in the midst of volcanic hills, no water, not much grass, the soil is thin, the ground is covered with cactus, or prickley pear, the blossom of which is very beautiful of different colors, some pink, some yellow & some red. Here the earth has felt a shock at no very distant period, & by a convulsive throe, these enormous piles of volcanic rocks were upheaved; I went out and climbed upon the top of one of these mountains of red stone sat down, & looked with wonder about, & thought of the dreadful scene which it must have once presented. Then came the question, what has caused the earth to be to its center shook? Sin! the very rocks seemed to reverberate, Sin has caused them to be upheaved that they may be eternal monuments of the curse & fall of man; viewing these symbols of divine wrath, I felt humbled; I took a small stone & wrote upon a flat rock beside me, Remember me in mercy O lord. I shall never forget this wild scene, & my thoughts & reflections there.

[June 14 — 62d day] Roads being good, we traveled about 24 ms. to-day, returned to the river, encamped, it is quite small here, but runs faster than ever, the water is not much better, Mountains in the distance on both sides of the river, with small cedars & pines growing upon them.

¹ So called from their having a dark appearance in the distance by reason of the small cedars which grow upon them. — *Original note.* The name Black Hills was used collectively to denote all of the ranges in the region of the Laramie Mountains, which are situate in the southwest corner of Wyoming and form a curvilinear or semi-circular range, of which the lower part has now the restricted name of Black Hills. Cf. Delano's *Life on the Plains*, p. 80-81, 111, for an interesting, contemporary topographical description.



Indian mode of disposing of their dead

Roads rocky & hilly, came to the river at noon [June 15 — 63d day], where there was a grove of cottonwood trees, here were several indians incamped, & a frenchman who kept a few articles to sell, the principle article was whiskey, which he sold at 12 dollars per gallon, or 25 cts a drink, there were several indian families, I went round to their lodges, saw one old indian 106 years old, he shook hands with us, smiled, appeared well, but he looked very aged; two fine looking young squaws were seated at the door of the tent, embroidering a deer skin to make a coat, they showed me one they had already made, & I must say that nicer work with a needle I never saw, or any thing more beautiful, it looked like sattin, & was finely ornamented with various colored beads. These two girls probably were this old mans descendants of the 3d or 4th generation.

[June 16 — 64th day] Roads very hilly, sandy, & dusty, quite warm weather, nights cool, light showers occasionally. We bought a cow to-day to work with our odd steer; gave 16 dollars & a half; some of the rest of the company bought 3 or 4, for people trade all along the road selling brandy, hardbread, flour, bacon, sugar &c, for most of those packing now are out of provisions, & buy of the waggoners, or get their meals at the tents. people do not charge very high for whatever they have to spare, for they do not like to haul it. [June 17 — 65th day] The roads still sandy; we are about 100 ms. above Ft. Laramie saw a horned frog¹ which appears to be the link between the toad and the terapin, or mud turtle; it is about the size of a small toad, his body very flat & round, light colored but specked with red & black specs; has two knots, or horns on his head, a short peaked tail, & crawles around very lively, but does not jump, like a frog or toad. Where we nooned today, as we started out, we saw some men on the opposite side of the river chasing a buffalo, which on coming to the river, plunged in, & made for our side; the men gathered their guns, ran for the bank, stationed themselves by some trees, the buffalo coming to a sandbar in the middle of the river, halted a while, & those on the other shore, poured out upon him a shower of bullets. I looked for him to fall every moment, but they overshot him, for their balls struck the water on this side; a dog was sent into the river, he made for the buffalo, & seizing him by the tail, he made for our shore & as he neared it, the dog still hanging to his tail, & swimming, as he rose upon the bank, he commenced to gallop away, when several guns were discharged at him, he halted, one lead entered the seat of life, the red blood spouted from his side; an ounce & a half ball from Georges double barrel shot gun, had done the deed; he walked on a little farther to some water, went into it, fell down, struggled & died in a few minutes. Twenty men with as many knives in as many minutes, had him in pieces ready for the stewkettle. One old mountaineer made choice of a *delicate* part, observing that no one would probably quarrel with him for his (part) piece. He was a fine male buffalo, eight years old (judging from his horns) hair short, &

¹ Not a frog, but a lizard, genus *Phrynosoma*.

nearly black. I never saw a more noble looking animal, his eye looked green & fiery in death, such strength did his enormous neck, & great muscles exhibit, that all wished they had a team like him. All repaired to their tents, to have a feast, we drove down to the river, where there was plenty of grass & wood, & encamped for the remainder of the day; we jerked most of our meat,¹ baked, boiled & fried some; it was fine beef, some said that it was better than any beef they had ever eat. In the morning [June 18—66th day] we renewed our journey, quite refreshed. Passed the ferry² of the north fork of Platte river; it is kept by some french, & indians, they have 3 boats well fixed with ropes & pulleys, & cross with ease, and expedition, they charge 5 dollars per waggon, 50 cts for every animal, & person; this is a heavy tax on the emigration, besides, this vast amount of money is in a manner thrown away, if the general government would take possession of or build ferries on the principal streams on this route & the prices be reduced one half or more; it would be a little something in Uncle Sams pocket, & remove an obstruction, I might have said destruction, because property, & even lives are lost, by trying to swim their teams across for as small as the sum may seem, many have not got it, for they have probably laid out all their money for their outfit, for most of those who go by land, are perhaps not able to go by water, but let the case be as it may, no one let him have ever so much money, likes to have it extorted from him. There is no reason why a ferry should not be kept here at a reasonable rate, for ferriage. On the high bluffs, on the south side of the river, is plenty of excellent pine, & cedar timber, as the gunwales of their boats show, for they said they got them there, & provisions for a few men, could be had at a reasonable rate, of the emigrant. [June 19—67th day] Fine roads this morning, we came to the top of a hill, where we had a view of the Sweet water mountains,³ distant some 40 miles, we turned down to the right, & encamped in a beautiful little valley, good grass but the water, what little there was, is charged with alkali but there is no better anywhere near; a great many camped hear [sic] to-night, it had the appearance of a large town, & in a tent near by ours, they were fiddling & dancing, nearly all night; this was the first dancing I had seen on the plains, although I had seen some choose partners on the Steamboat, for the first sett on the plains, but there had been so much sickness on the Platte, that perhaps they were rejoicing that they had left it. [June 20—68th day] We passed on over a sandy barren country, where even sage cannot grow, but a still hardier shrub called greese wood⁴ abounds here, it is good for nothing to burn, & I cannot think of any use it is, unless, for the rabbits to hide behind. Quite warm, cool breeze from the mountains; we crossed greesewood creek,⁵ went

¹ Refers to the process of cutting meat into long strips and preserving it by drying in the open air or over a fire.

² As to these early ferries kept by French Canadians, etc., see Coutant's *Hist. of Wyoming*, vol. 1, p. 365-367.

³ Granite Mountains seem to be meant.

⁴ Greasewood, a low shrub prevalent in saline localities of the West and of various genera.

⁵ Greasewood Creek, an affluent of the Sweetwater River.

down some 2 ms, & encamped, not very good grass, I have been told that it is better 5 or 6 miles farther down, where it empties into Sweet water.¹

[June 21 — 69th day] We saw several antelope, 2 of our men went in persuit, killed a young one; came across a human skeleton, brought the skull bone to the waggon, I think it was an indians skull. We soon came in sight of Independence Rock,² it did not look at all like I had formed an idea, & at a distance, it has no very imposing appearance; but as we approached it, its magnitude was then striking, & beautiful, it is an enormous mass of solid blocks of granite, it is so large that its highth seems inconsiderable, until you climb upon it, which you can easily do, at least I did, but when I reached the low place in the middle, I took off my shoes, for in passing around the side to go up to the top, there is some danger of sliping, which would presipitate you to the bottom. There are thousands of names of persons upon this rock, which have been placed there from year to year, by those who think, "there is something in a name" & many beautiful flowers growing in the crevices I have one which I gathered here near the top of the rock it is a kind of Lilly a beautiful flower. We nooned here, & then went on crossed sweet water,³ which I had supposed from its name to be the best water in the world, but it has more alkali in it, than the Platte, it is not so muddy, but the water is nearly the same here, Some 6 or 8 miles onward, we came to what is called the Devils Gate,⁴ it is a deep chasam, or gap in the mountain, which has been rent assunder for the passage of Sweet Water river, the opening is not wide, but the rocks on each side are perpendicular, & of great highth some 400 ft., the road passes a little to the right, where there is a nataral pass through the mountain, but we could hear the river roaring, & chafing, through its narrow rocky channel; a person who has curiosity, & nerve enough, may climb & look over the brink of this yawning gulf. Some of our men went up part way, but said that satisfied their curiosity. We passed here a trading post, they kept quite an assortment of goods, which were all brought from St. Louis, their [sic] enormous waggons, serving as a kind of shop, & store house; they said they had brought 60 hundred to the waggon from St. Louis; they had recruited their teams, some of them were fat, for the grass here is excellent; they offered them for sale, one of our company bought 3 yoke, for from 45, to 60 dollars per

¹ This river rises in the Wind River Mountains and is a western affluent of the North Platte River. For the roads and fords in this region, see Delano, p. 104-105.

² Independence Rock is said to have received its name from the circumstance of a party ascending it on July 4th and celebrating there Independence Day. It is an isolated mass of gray granite in length about 1950 feet, and in height about 120 feet, according to Frémont's observation in 1842, at which time he marked a large cross thereon, a fact which was introduced adversely against him during his presidential campaign in 1856. Frémont speaks of the many names inscribed on the rock. — Frémont's *Report*. Washington, 1845, p. 72. On account of these names it has been called a "tombstone" and Father De Smet named it "the great register of the desert." Joel Palmer, in 1845, described it as follows: "Portions of it are covered with inscriptions of the names of travelers, with the dates of their arrival—some carved, some in black paint, and others in red." — *Journal*, in Thwaites's "Early Western Travels," vol. 30, p. 67. For other descriptions, see Delano, p. 98; Chittenden, vol. 1, p. 471-472.

³ Sweetwater River.

⁴ Described by Frémont, in 1842, as follows: "Devil's Gate, where the Sweet Water cuts through the point of a granite ridge. The length of the passage is about three hundred yards and the width thirty-five yards. The walls of rock are vertical, and about four hundred feet in height." — *Report*. Washington, 1845, p. 57, where a picture of it is also given. For other descriptions, see Palmer's *Journal*, in Thwaites's "Early Western Travels," vol. 30, p. 67-68; Delano, p. 99-100; Chittenden, vol. 1, p. 473-474.

yoke. This is a romantic place, & a good place for a post, for there is abundance of grass, & water; & some considerable pine & cedar timber on the mountains. We followed up the stream two or 3 ms & encamped, where the mountains were of naked rocks, without the least vegetation upon them, I now saw how appropriate the name, stony or rocky was applied to them. We passed an alkali pond this morning & gathered up a panful of the salaratus, which looks like frozen snow, forming a crust around the edge of the water; I tried some of it, in some bread; it made it quite light, but gave it a bitter taste.

[June 22 — 70th day] The roads very sandy; while we were nooning, there was a severe hailstorm, but it had nearly expended itself, before it reached us, but as we proceeded, we found the hail in places 2 or 3 inches deep, & they were so large, that it had trimmed up the sage brush completely; it lay on the ground in shady places till the next day, we encamped for the night on the river, very good grass, but there was alkali all over the ground, we tried to keep our cattle from it as much as we could, but they got a little, which affected them some, but we gave them some fat bacon, which is said to be good for them. Great sign of buffalo here; also saw one today galloping away through a gap¹ in the mountains. [June 23 — 71st day] To day we passed through a narrow defile in the mountains, where we were compeled to ford the river 3 times,² in less than 2 miles, we had to block up our waggon bed several inches; it is a very bad place, there is a way to go around, but I am told that it is about 10 ms. & very sandy. There were goose berry bushes here by the road side, this was the first fruit we had seen; we gathered some of the green berries, stewed them for supper, found them delicious. We soon emerged into an open plain, where the main chain of the Rocky mountains appeared in the distance; Crossed Sweet Water again, went up a few miles & encamped; not very good grass, plenty of alkali, & some of the largest kind of sage, we soon had a good fire, for the nights are getting cool here in the mountains, & after supper we were seated around it, some sitting on yokes, & some on buffalo heads; & they do not make a bad seat; and some are used for writing upon, & then setting them up by the side of the road, generally informing the passerby, that Mr. A. B. &c. passed such a day, all well &c. Saw some written in '49 & '50, & though penciled was not yet effaced, we frequently find a buffalo head stuck up with a notice, that there is a spring in such & such a place; nearly all the skulls & shoulder blades along the road, are more or less written upon. Loyd he wrote a moralizing epitaph upon a very large old skull, stating that this animal had fulfilled the laws of nature, & that his head, still served as a seat to the weary traveler.

[June 24 — 72d day] Had a shower last evening, quite cool, have to wrap up to keep warm, good roads, except 3 or 4 this morning, passed the ice springs; here are great quantities of alkali, & saltpeter, which kills

¹ Delano, p. 104-105, refers to the "gap" or "gloomy gorge."

² The place known as the Three Crossings.

the stalk [stock] which stop here, for we saw more dead cattle to day, than we have seen before on the route. We did not stop to dig for ice,¹ for we were cold enough without it. Passed on crossed Sweet Water twice, & encamped on the same, found tolerable grass. There was a trading post at the head of this little valey, which we passed in the morning. [June 25 — 73d day] The roads to day hilly & rocky, weather cold, had a sprinkle of snow & hail; as we reached the top of a high ridge we had a fine view of the wind range of mountains² a little to our right, these are the highest peaks of these mountains, which we have been so long gradually ascending; nothing that I had before seen of mountain scenery, was half so beautiful, for the white snow lying upon the dark blue ground, looked like pictures of silver; no painting can give that delicate tint, of light & shade, & it continually varied, as the light of the sun shown upon it, or when it was obscured by clouds. We passed a bank of snow, and an ice spring, so called, from its water being as cold as ice could make it. It was excellent water but the weather was rather to cold to have made much of a relish for it. We went on to Strawberry creek³ & encamped, good grass, & the water of this beautiful stream, is excellent. George had a severe chill, this evening, and a high fever, he was sick a day or two. We are about 15 ms from the South Pass, *we are hardly half way*.⁴ I felt tired & weary, O the luxury of a house, a house! I felt what some one expressed, who had traveled this long & tedious journey, that, "it tries the soul." I would have given all my interest in California, to have been seated around my own fireside, surrounded by friend & relation. That this journey is tiresome, no one will doubt, that it is perilous, the deaths of many testify, and the heart has a thousand missgivings, & the mind is tortured with anxiety, & often as I passed the fresh made graves, I have glanced at the side boards of the waggon, not knowing how soon it might serve as a coffin for some one of us; but thanks for the kind care of Providence we were favored more than some others.

[June 26 — 74th day] We proceeded onward, crossed Sweet Water for the last time,⁵ here it is a real mountain torrent, we soon arrived at the summit, or Pass⁶ of the Rocky Mountains, this has more the appearance of a plain, for it is some 5 ms across, & nearly 30 ms wide from north to south. The road is sandy, & some rocky, but not steep in no place here. We traveled about 25 ms to-day, & encamped below the Pacific

¹ The ice is found here by digging down some 18 or 20 inches below the surface. — *Original note*.

² The Wind River Mountains, a range of the Rocky Mountains, running northwest and southeast, in Fremont County, Wyo., and of which Fremont Peak, of 13,790 feet, is the highest altitude. It was the ultimate limit of Fremont's expedition of 1842, and he presents a view of these mountains in his *Report*. Washington, 1845, opp. p. 66. This range was earlier described, *e. g.* in Irving's *The Rocky Mountains*. Phila., 1837, vol. 1, p. 62-63.

³ Strawberry Creek, in Fremont County, Wyo.

⁴ These words are scored out in the original manuscript.

⁵ See on this last crossing, Delano, p. 113; Chittenden, vol. 1, chap. 26.

⁶ The South Pass, "the most celebrated pass in the entire length of the Continental Divide" and where "the traveler, though only half-way to his destination, felt that he could see the beginning of the end." — Chittenden, vol. 1, p. 475. It is in Fremont County, Wyo. Delano, p. 115, describes it. Gold was discovered here and it became a great goldmining center, for which see Coutant's *Hist. of Wyoming*, vol. 1, chap. XLIII.

Springs,¹ poor place to camp, for where there is any grass, it is so miry that it is dangerous for stock to go, 2 or 3 of ours got in the mire & a good many others, they were got out, but with much difficulty. We now consider ourselves about half way, but the "tug of war" is yet to come. We have now bid adieu to the waters, which make their way into the Atlantic, & now we drink of the waters which flow into the Pacific. Our faithful team still looks well, they, nor we, have not yet suffered only fatigue, they have generally had plenty of grass & water, but according to the guides we may suffer for both, but hope to find it better than some have represented. More than half of the cattle on the road have the hollow horn,² the man who is traveling with us has lost, several head & there are two or three more which will not go much farther.³

¹ The Pacific Springs empty into Pacific Creek, an affluent of the Big Sandy River, in Fremont County, Wyo. Here is the first water that is met flowing into the Pacific Ocean. Cf. Delano, p. 113. Chittenden, vol. 1, p. 476, locates it as 952 miles on the Oregon Trail.

² A cattle disease through which the core of the horn is lost.

³ Here her journal ends. It was written in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.



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